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70 VINU  
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CALIFORNIA

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# CALIFORNIA AT CHRISTMAS ~~TIDE~~ of CALIFORNIA

BY

ELLA M. SEXTON

185

AUTHOR OF "STORIES OF CALIFORNIA" AND "WHAT THE  
CHILDREN SAY"



SAN FRANCISCO, CHRISTMAS, 1902

TO THE  
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||

To my friend

Mrs. John H. Jewett

||

To Mrs. Josephine Foster  
with the author's regards,  
740230 Ella M. Weston.



## CALIFORNIA AT CHRISTMAS-TIDE



**“D**ECEMBER!” says the year: but rose and bee  
And meadow-lark with trills of sweetest tune  
Say “No, ’tis June!”

Stern black and white, the calendar’s decree,  
Yet we who read, bewildered, turn to see  
Wide intervals of tender green, and thrill  
To fire of southern sun caressing still  
December’s noon.

What dawns late-flushed with mingled gold and rose,  
And slowly bright’ning, till each perfect day  
Smiles hours away  
Under a cloudless turquoise sky! Then shows  
The pearly bubble of the moon, that grows  
To luminous whiteness as the low sun wanes;  
While, as the planets burn, December feigns  
June’s mellow ray.

Unchanged the spires of cypress, and the sweep  
Of crowding hosts of gum trees up the hill  
Where summer still  
With gold of vagrant poppies flecks the steep;  
Yet winter violets bloom with fragrance deep.  
Perplexed, entranced, we are but sure this seems  
The “land of afternoon,” and lotus-dreams  
Our senses thrill.



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## A CHRISTMAS ROSE



**R**OSE, at the Monterey Mission unfolding,  
Rose the good Padres once cherishing trained  
On these adobe walls gnarled stems upholding  
Chalices perfumed and sunset-pink stained,  
Rosa Castilian, sweet rose of the Mission,  
Secrets, ah, surely, your gold hearts retained  
As the long century drowsily waned !

Rose, did they whisper, those Padres, but aves  
While gay boleros soft tinkled without  
Corridors white in the moonlight, and pathways  
Darkened where twin shadows flitted about ?  
Rosa Castilian, fair rose of the Mission,  
Never a kiss set your pink lips to pout,  
Never a languorous lover to flout ?

Rose, in some odorous twilight fast-flying  
(Waiting the Angelus prayers to repeat)  
Stooped not a friar, gray-robed, softly sighing  
Into your warm ear a confidence sweet ?  
Rosa Castilian, dear rose of the Mission,  
Once you leaned, surely, some ardent heart's beat,  
Quickened by ancient romances, to greet ?

Rose on these crumbling walls tenderly cherished  
Years to you naught but the sunshine and rain,  
Dust are the Padres, their sepulchres perished ;  
Mouldering missal and vestments remain,  
Rosa Castilian, old rose of the Mission,  
Long-vanished glories their voiceless refrain,  
Passing of power Franciscan, of Spain.

Rose with this austral sun's golden wine filling  
Lavish cups, brimming and perfumed to-day,  
No breath of winter, nor icy blast chilling  
Bloom of December as constant as May,  
Rosa Castilian, first rose of the Mission—  
Ah, but the magical tales you might say,  
Pink lips from golden hearts curving away!



## CHRISTMAS ❖ ❖ ❖ HERE AND THERE



**B**ELLS of Christmas, a carillon sending  
Of silver chimes through the sunny day,  
Cloudless azure of June sky bending  
Over the sapphire bay—  
*Bitter the Christmas there, and snowing,  
Keen the rough winds blowing!*

Sunshine flooding the purple distance  
Of farther mountain, and hillsides near;  
Violets breathing with sweet insistence,  
“Winter is banished here.”  
*Frozen and bleak the garden spaces  
Lift their desolate faces!*

Larks in our grassy meadows trilling,  
Love and hope in their raptures told;  
Clusters of lavish poppies spilling  
Bright, brimming cups of gold—  
*Silent the woodlands gray, where only  
Bare fields shiver, lonely!*

Lightly fall in our golden weather  
Strokes of Time for the flying hours;  
Fair Earth smiles with the Year, together  
Marking our paths with flowers—  
*Long the winter's reign, and weary,  
Cold December dreary!*



## TWO PICTURES



### THERE:

**B**ITTER the keen winds blowing under sullen skies and  
low,  
Where the dying sun, his brief task done, sinks blood-red  
over the snow;  
Snow with its merciless beauty, snow with its deadly hold  
On the pulses warm of each shuddering form that dares  
the cruel cold.  
God pity the shelterless vagrant whose wandering steps  
and slow  
Falter and fail in the icy gale while darkens the waste  
below—  
O, the scourging lash of the blizzard, the blinding, stinging  
sleet,  
The gaunt white wolves of Hunger and Cold that follow,  
grim and fleet!



### HERE:

**N**EW grass in all the sunny spaces;  
New robes for earth's brown breast  
The rains weave fast, in vacant places  
By southern sun caressed.

New hopes through hearts despairing thrilling,  
New life a glad world knows  
With larks in greenest meadows trilling  
Where gold of poppies glows.

Red are the garden roses budding;  
Through casements wide, the room  
Warm winds with violet odors flooding,  
Knows Spring's dear, faint perfume.



## TO A DECEMBER VIOLET



**D**EAR violet, a passing guest  
With Lenten gown of purple dressed  
In colder clime,  
Sweet saint, uplifting tender eyes  
To April's pale and changing skies—  
As brief your prime.

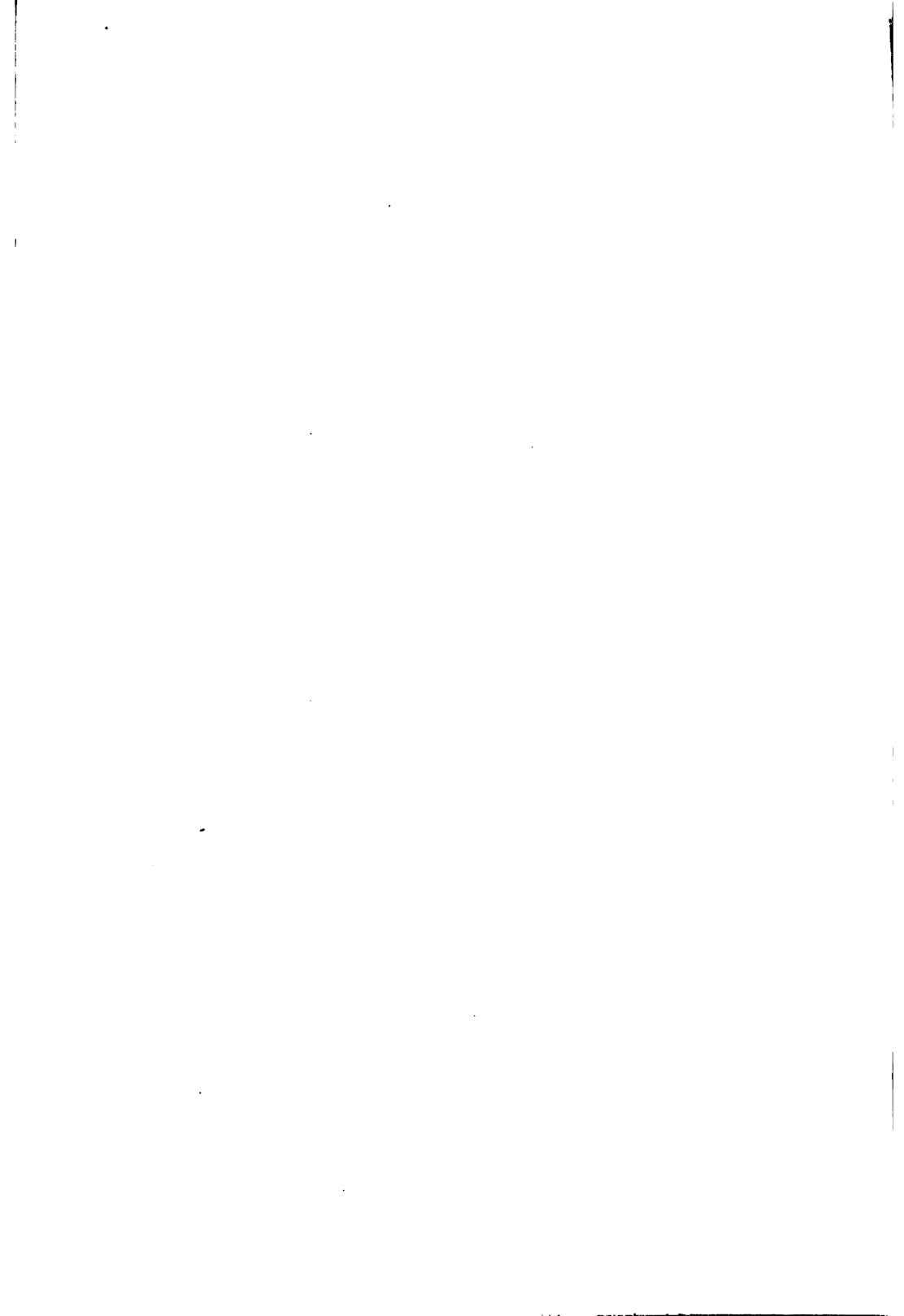
But constant to our sunshine, here  
We find you, love you through the year,  
As friend, nay, more :  
Fast drive the wind-swept rains, and, too,  
The frost smites frailer bloom, while you  
Smile as before.

No passionate rose are you, sweetheart,  
With red lips curved to all, apart  
In shyest grace  
You nestle—yet the garden's pride  
Of bloom and beauty wanes beside  
Your dainty face.

In sheltering leaves you hide, demure,  
From careless glance or touch secure,  
But lovers true  
Led by your perfume faintly sweet—  
A breath of heaven, perchance—we greet  
Your heavenly blue.

Ah, little love, your calm content  
Shames restless souls with striving spent.  
Would we might find  
Nepenthe in the sunshine: cease  
To war with Fate and smile in peace,  
To life resigned !





WITH CHRISTMAS  
VIOLETS TO HER



FROM sunny gardens where no blight  
Of winter mars their perfect bloom,  
These purple violets waft delight  
Of sweet perfume.

Across wide, desolate wastes of snow,  
With breath of summer swiftly fare,  
Where stern December skies brood low  
O'er gardens bare.

Tell her of sapphire sky and sea,  
Of warm, caressing sunshine here,  
And green fields fair as Arcady  
Where larks sing clear.

Yet, Sweet, 'twere Arcady though snows  
Lay deep along each frosty way,  
If, but your cheek could lean, a rose,  
To mine to-day!



## CHRISTMAS SONG FOR CALIFORNIA



**N**O winter's blight our Christmas knows,  
No bitter blasts, nor sparkling snows:  
The old year wanes, the old year goes  
While halcyon hours  
Drift on enchanted pinions fleet  
In sunny gardens, where with sweet  
And haunting perfume violets greet  
Late summer's flowers.

Scarce dream we Christmas almost near  
So blue December skies appear,  
So green the beckoning fields, so clear  
Rise hills remote.  
The golden present thralls: no past  
Nor morrow's cares dark shadows cast,  
But on Time's dial, flying fast  
Bright hours we note.

Ring out, glad Christmas bells, nor cease  
From snows to palms by tropic seas,  
Your tidings of good-will and peace  
Exultant sound.  
Ring out, blest tale of love Divine  
Where'er the Christmas wreaths of pine,  
Our violets blue, or holly twine  
The world around.



## OUR CHRISTMAS BERRIES

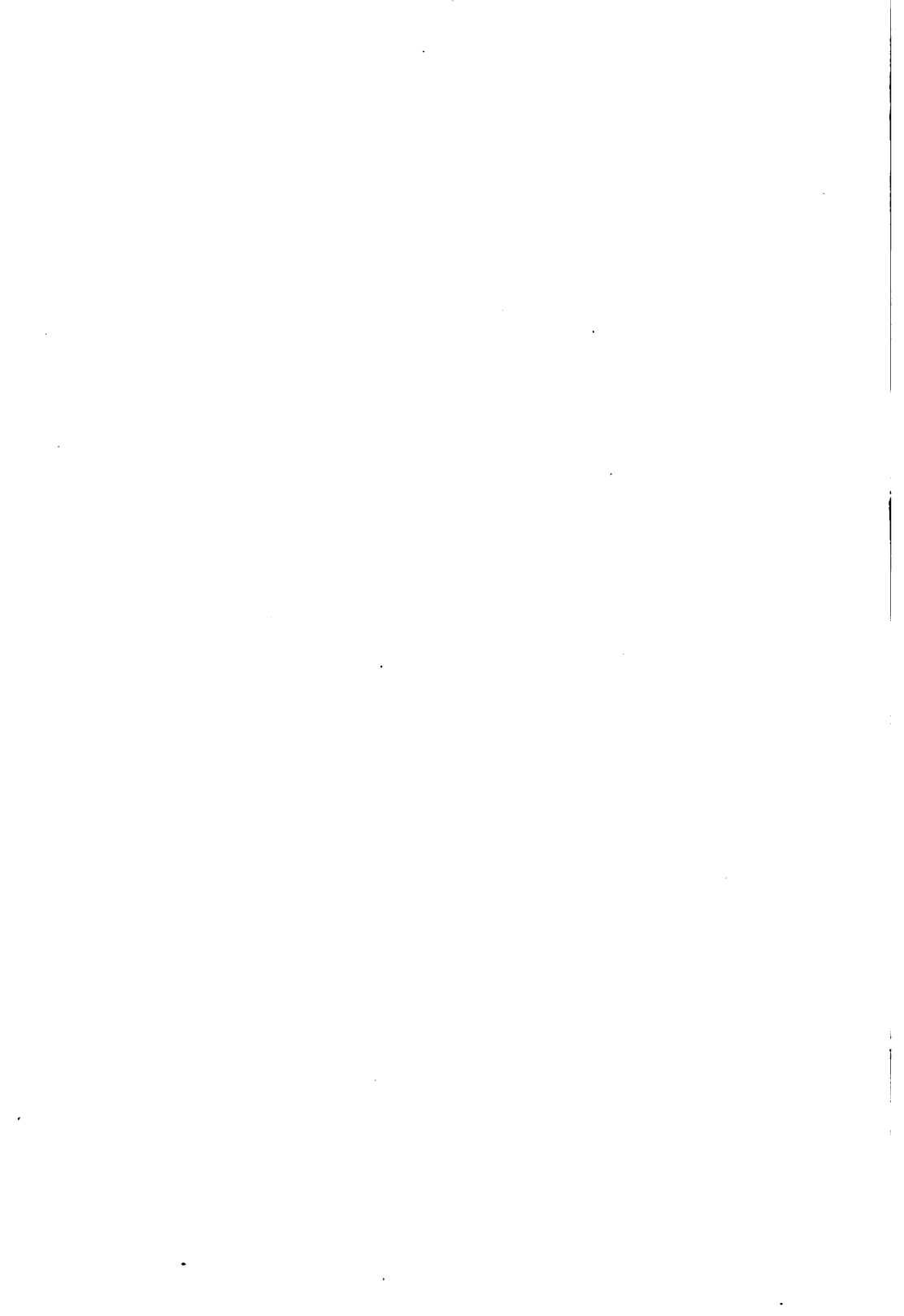


**H**IGH on the leaning hillsides climbing  
Yon purple wall of the mountain flanks  
Out of the chaparral's thickest tangle  
That rims the rushing torrent's banks,  
With a brilliant glimmer of vivid scarlet  
Our Christmas berries smile, and shine  
From a maze of oak and glossy laurel,  
Manzanita and wind-swept pine.

Up the wild, rough trails in the canyons,  
Crushing the ferns and wet, sweet bay,  
While the pungent odor of yerba-buena  
Follows our breathless, headlong way :  
Clambering high for more perfect clusters  
Set red-ripe in the tenderest green—  
O, the joy of it, and far gazing  
From heights won bravely the seaward scene !

Perchance for robin as red, and blue-jay  
This feast of Nature's is spread alone,  
But lavish as all this fair land's treasures,  
Free as the sunshine the poorest own.  
So to the dwellers where, thronging closely,  
Glimpses of woodland beauty are rare,  
Joy and color these Christmas berries  
Bring to the dullness of ceaseless care.

What care we for the alien holly  
Stiff and stately with ancient pride  
Of Merrie England? We crown our revels  
With sun-kissed garlands, and wreath beside  
Branches of redwood with fragrance sylvan  
Grandest of mansions, or cot within :  
Lending the smile of Mother Nature  
To make us comrades, and Christmas kin.



## NEAR AND FAR AT CHRISTMAS TIME



**T**HE Christmas bells ring out—though bleak December  
Far, far remote appears  
To hearts that in this summer land, remember  
Gay feasts of other years  
In colder climes, beyond these palms, and breathing  
Wild fragrance of the pine  
From trackless woodlands, where deep snows were wreath-  
ing  
Their glittering garlands fine.

Then rang the bells in mellow cadence, chiming  
Through keen and frosty air:  
Rang happiness, our answering heart-beats timing  
The Christmas chorus there.  
But on this western shore (an alien seeming  
To winter's rigorous hold)  
Perplexed we pause, to deem December dreaming  
As flowers of June unfold.

Or from the high cloud-spaces swift descending  
The spirit of the rain  
Hovers above the waiting hillsides, bending  
Low to the thirsty plain:  
Her vapory mantle on the south wind flowing  
Athwart the mountain's crest,  
Her hands outstretched with gracious benison, sowing  
Promise of harvest blest.



Soon follow emerald leagues of young grain springing :  
Bright gold on sunny slopes  
Our poppies scatter, while the larks dream, singing,  
Of love and wakened hopes.  
Stirs the warm earth with quickening growth and tender  
The blue of Christmas skies :  
Radiant with floods of soft yet brilliant splendor  
The low sun mounts, and dies.

## BEFORE CHRISTMAS



COUNTING the days till Christmas!  
A mighty army tells  
These rosary-beads of old Time's chain  
Ere ring the Christmas bells:  
And our round world far and nearer  
From palm to Arctic pine,  
There's a myriad eager hands that wait  
The Christmas wreaths to twine.

Counting the days till Christmas!  
Slow wanes the score, till all  
Are told, with constant, anxious glance  
Each calendar must recall.  
Days by the low sun smiling  
So brief, yet each we greet  
With longing sighs for the laggard march  
Of Time's unhurried feet.

Counting the days till Christmas!  
God's gifts, our children, dwell  
In a maze of happy dreams these nights;  
And daylight stories tell  
Of marvelous gifts the Christ-child  
To a fairy-tree will bear  
That grows, on Christmas Eve, to hold  
The wondrous gifts they share.

Counting the days till Christmas!  
Sweet days of tender care  
That loved ones may on the blessed morn  
Find longed-for treasures fair.  
Thus dreaming, hoping and waiting,  
That holiest day draws near  
When "Peace on earth, good-will to men"  
Ring out the joy-bells clear.

